

## Remarks of Richard Barringer, Chair, Maine Quality of Place Council

“Mobilize Maine” – April 6, 2009

As chair of the Maine Quality of Place Council, I am delighted to be here to thank all our distinguished guests for coming together today; and to say that this partnership is *not* just more of the same – not just “old wine in new bottles;” in fact, it marks *a bold, new departure* in economic development policy for Maine, the most important I believe since the governorship of Ed Muskie in the 1950s.

It is, as well, the most *promising* opportunity I have seen yet, to help Maine people finally put behind us the old “economy versus the environment,” the “payroll v. pickerel” debate, *once and for all*.

The 2006 Brookings report observed that Maine enjoys a global reputation not just for hardworking people and quality products but, as well, for majestic mountains, unbroken forests, open fields, wild rivers, pristine lakes, a celebrated coast, picturesque villages, historic buildings and downtowns, lively arts and culture, and exceptional recreational opportunities.

Together, these amount to a globally-known “brand” – Maine’s “Quality of Place” – that is Maine’s *strongest* competitive advantage in today’s economy. We must learn to think of these assets as *the basic infrastructure of Maine’s new economy*, and strengthen them as the very *foundation* of our future prosperity.

We have found that Maine’s Quality of Place *is*, in fact, an

increasingly important economic asset, supporting high-value jobs, products, and services all across Maine – from Belfast to Bethel, Fort Kent to Kittery, all along the mid-coast, and downeast.

(see [www.maine.gov/spo/specialprojects/qualityofplace/index.htm](http://www.maine.gov/spo/specialprojects/qualityofplace/index.htm)).

*This effort we announce today is all about strengthening these assets all across Maine, in order to grow the Maine economy as a whole.* Here is why; here is what we have learned from our national research:

**First, Quality of Place is an economic driver of real and growing value.** Places with authentic Quality of Place are increasingly *scarce* today; and scarce goods have economic value that influences people's financial, travel, locational, and retirement decisions.

**Second, That Quality of Place *strengthens* a region's economic prospects.** Areas with strong Q of P experience higher employment and higher population and income growth.

**Third, Today's most promising, high-growth industries value Quality of Place.** Q of P is *most* important to businesses that rely on well-educated workers; it helps them to attract and retain employees. Modern industries with workers who are attracted by Q of P have better growth prospects than traditional manufacturing industries.

**Fourth, Quality of Place is a needed complement to, not a substitute for traditional economic development strategies.** Business costs, tax policy, transportation and telecommunications, and workforce

development will remain *vital* to our success.

**And, finally, effective Quality of Place strategies *must* be organized from the ground-up, by local folks who know these assets best, and are their direct beneficiaries.**

Last June, by Executive Order (13 FY 08/09), Governor John Baldacci established the Maine Quality of Place Council to continue the work of the previous Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place, whose research and recommendations form the basis for today's partnership.

In signing the Executive Order, Governor Baldacci said, "Expanding (these) efforts and building an investment strategy around our outstanding assets and qualities will grow Maine's economy *now* and in the future."

Today, we begin that effort in earnest. It will begin not from Augusta, but from all across the state, with local people who know and value the assets that are important to their communities. It will build on strategies that are designed and implemented at the *regional* level, with the support of *all* state agencies.

It is the culmination of two years of work by the Maine Quality of Place Council and its predecessor council; and some members of both are here today. If I may, I would like to take a moment to recognize them. . . .

Finally, we are pleased and grateful that the Governor has introduced closely-related legislation that will support this effort – LD 1389, *An Act to Create State and Regional Quality of Place Investment Strategies for High-value Jobs*,

*Products and Services in Maine.*

LD 1389 will assure the needed and continuing coordination, support, and oversight of this important, new initiative. Some of the bill's sponsors are here with us today – if I may take a moment to acknowledge them, as well. . . .

Thank you all, very much.

***LD 1389, An Act to Create State and Regional Quality of Place Investment Strategies for High-value Jobs, Products and Services in Maine***

Sponsor: Sen. Dennis Damon

Co-Sponsors: Rep. John Piotti

Rep. Seth Berry

Rep. Bob Dushesne

Rep. Nancy Smith

Sen Jon Courtney

Sen. Peter Mills

Sen. Elizabeth Schneider

***Maine Quality of Place Council***

Richard Barringer, Muskie School, *Chair*

Edward Barrett, City Manager. Bangor

David A. Cole, Commissioner of MDOT

Martha Freeman, Director, State Planning Office

Eleanor Kinney, Natural Resource Council of ME

Patrick K. McGowan, Commissioner, DOC

Donna McNeil, ME Cultural Affairs Council

Matthew Polstein, New England Outdoor Center

John Richardson, Commissioner, DECD

Robert Thompson, Executive Director, AVCOG

Robin Zinchuk, Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce

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